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DEPT PASS USAID TO LAC/RSD, LAC/SAM, G/ENV, PPC/ENV
TREASURY FOR USED IBRD AND IDB AND INTL/MDB
USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE: LIZ MAYHEW
INTERIOR FOR DIR INT AFFAIRS: K WASHBURN
INTERIOR FOR FWS: TOM RILEY
INTERIOR PASS USGS FOR INTERNATIONAL: J WEAVER
JUSTICE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES: JWEBB
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL: CAM HILL-MACON
USDA FOR ARS/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH: G FLANLEY
NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL: HAROLD STOLBERG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [XR](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AMERICA ESTH NEWS, NUMBER 78

¶1. The following is the seventy-eighth in a series of newsletters, published by the Brasilia Regional Environmental Hub, covering environment, science and technology, and health news in South America. The information below was gathered from news sources from across the region, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Hub office or our constituent posts. Addressees who would like to receive a user-friendly email version of this newsletter should contact Larissa Stoner at stonerla@state.gov. The e-mail version also contains a calendar of upcoming ESTH events in the region.

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Agriculture

13. Brazil Will Share Expertise in Agriculture with Africa

JULY 14, 2006 - African nations are set to benefit from Brazilian expertise in tropical agriculture thanks to an agreement between Brazil and Ghana. Under the agreement signed 10 July, Ghana will host the first African branch of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa). The branch will act as a regional base for sharing Brazil's agricultural knowledge with the whole continent, and will be located at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in Accra. Two staff will identify local research needs, plan studies that can be undertaken in Brazil, and seek international partners to cooperate in the agency's initiatives. Research will be carried out in Brazil by Embrapa's 38 research units, which will send their findings back to Ghana. The branch was decided upon after an increasing number of demands coming from Africa for Brazilian agricultural technology. The move comes as part of Brazil's commitment to South-South cooperation.

Source - SciDev

Health

14. Study on Infants in Peru Sparks Ethics Inquiry

JULY 18, 2006 - A legal inquiry was launched to determine whether Peruvian babies were given a medicine made from genetically modified rice without their parents' informed consent during a clinical trial. The researchers deny any wrongdoing and are backed by Peruvian doctors and ethicists, but the claim has prompted Peruvian parliamentarian Mercedes Cabanillas to take action. The clinical trial in question was led by Nelly Zavaleta of Peru's Nutrition

Research Institute and began in August 2004. It compared three oral rehydration solutions for treating infant diarrhea - a major killer in developing nations.

One solution, made by US company Ventria Bioscience, contained proteins found in breast milk that had been produced from rice with human genes inserted into its DNA. Zavaleta and colleagues found that this solution significantly cut the severity and duration of acute diarrhea. But critics fear that introducing two human genes into plants to produce drugs could threaten people's safety.

Source - SciDev

15. AIDS Treatment Advances in Brazil

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JULY 18, 2006 - Brazilian researchers are giving a large step to increase efficiency in AIDS treatment. Just like the Americans, who recently announced a combination of three retroviral medicines in a single pill, state company Lafepe (Pernambuco State Pharmaceutical Laboratory) is concluding tests to launch three combined medicines. The project has been developed over the past eight months by scientists and experts from Pernambuco's federal university. The Lafepe laboratory has the capacity to produce 100 million pills annually.

Source - Public Affairs US Embassy Brasilia. Original source Gazeta Mercantil.

16. Argentina, Paraguay Sign Health Cooperation Agreement

JULY 17, 2006 - The presidents of Argentina and Paraguay signed a series of agreements and memorandums of intent to cooperate in sanitary vigilance and prevention on the border between the two countries. The agreements also set joint action toward diseases such as AIDS, dengue, malaria, Chagas, and basic first aid procedures. Argentina's program for Community Doctors, which includes nearly 6,000 doctors throughout the country, will lead the first aid training for Paraguay doctors.

Source - Argentina's Ministry of Health

17. Argentina Launches Latin America's First Biosecurity Lab

JULY 14, 2006 - The Ministry of Health inaugurated the National Administration of Health Laboratories and Institutes (ANLIS), the first biosecurity lab built in Latin America. The Level 2 and 3 labs will be used for animal and human epidemiological vigilance. Nearly 30 million pesos (approximately USD10 million) were spent on the new building. The Minister of Health, Gines Gonzalez Garca, also announced plans to double the country's investment in research, also improving reference labs throughout Argentina's provinces in order to strengthen the network of epidemiological investigation. Avian Influenza was pointed out as an example of diseases that can be monitored through this new lab.

Source - Argentina's Ministry of Health

Water Issues

18. Brazil Adopts Freshwater Ecoregions in First National Freshwater Management Plan

JUNE 06, 2006 - The government of Brazil has approved its first national plan for managing its freshwater resources. A critical component of this plan is the adoption of freshwater ecoregions defined through scientific studies resulting from a partnership between The Nature Conservancy and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The Freshwater Management Plan assures that aquatic biodiversity is an

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important aspect of freshwater planning for the entire country.

Before, the most important considerations for the government were hydroelectric potential, navigation and water utilization regimes for drinking water, other household uses, industrial uses and irrigation. With the world's largest river basin - the Amazon - and the world's largest tropical floodplain - the Pantanal - the freshwater biodiversity of Brazil is staggering. In fact, Brazil has more freshwater fish species than any other country on Earth.

Source - The Nature Conservancy

Wildlife

9. Albatross Colony Observed In Southern Chile

JULY 18, 2006 - Research by Chilean scientists revealed the presence of black-browed and grey-headed albatrosses in Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of Chile. Investigation by the Cuaternario Fuego Institute (Ceque), and the Institute of Chilean Antarctic Research (Inach) revealed the southern end of the country, only a few hundreds kilometers south of Punta Arenas, has become a breeding ground for the huge gliders of the sky. Chile's colonies may help scientists study the birds. In 2004, at their breeding colonies in South Georgia, an island in the South Atlantic Ocean near Chile's tip, British researchers tagged 47 young gray-headed albatrosses with instruments that log daylight levels. When 35 returned 18 months later, the team downloaded data from 22 of the instruments and read the pattern of daylight lengths. Twelve birds flew east, all the way around the world. Three flew around the globe twice. Typical journeys involved flights of as much as 600 miles in a day.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

10. Peru, Brazil Join Forces Against Biopiracy in the Amazon

JUNE 15, 2006 - Peru and Brazil have signed a series of agreements to protect the natural resources and traditional knowledge of the Amazon. Experts from both countries met June 6 and 7 in Lima to set a strategy for combating biopiracy. The first step outlined by this strategy is to carry out an inventory of resources and have this list recognized by intellectual property entities worldwide. A second step would be to get other Amazon countries involved in the initiative.

Source - SciDev

Fishing & Marine Conservation

11. First U.S. Marine National Monument Established in Hawaii

JULY 18, 2006 - On June 15, President Bush created the largest protected area in U.S. territory, the Northwest Hawaiian Islands

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(NWHI) Marine National Monument. The new monument is the largest single conservation area in the United States and the largest protected marine area in the world. As a monument, the NWHI covers nearly 140,000 square miles - more than 100 times larger than Yosemite National Park, larger than 46 of the 50 states, and more than seven times larger than all existing National Marine Sanctuaries combined. The NWHI Marine National Monument is an entirely new designation, the first area to be created as a National Marine Monument. The existing National Monuments are administered by the Department of the Interior, while National Marine Sanctuaries are administered by the Department of Commerce's NOAA. The President's proclamation charges NOAA to use its expertise to oversee the new marine areas, and the Fish and Wildlife Service to apply its skills to the wildlife refuge areas. As part of the proclamation, the Departments of the Interior and Commerce will work with the State of Hawaii and the public to develop a plan to manage the monument.

Source - NOAA

¶12. Venezuela: Seeking Adoptive Parents for Turtles

JULY 08, 2006 - A program to protect sea turtles of the southern Caribbean and the beaches of Venezuela began a new phase with the search for "adoptive parents" -- symbolically -- for each of the animals sighted by the Center for Research and Conservation of Sea Turtles (CICTMAR). The cost of adopting a turtle of the leatherback species (*Dermochelys conacea*) is 30 dollars, and the renewal price is 25 dollars, if it is an individual adoption, and 140 dollars for a collective adoption. Whoever adopts a turtle or nest receives a certificate, informational material and posters. Cictmar, in addition to protecting the nests, marking and studying the females, promotes education of the residents of Paria peninsula, in far northeastern Venezuela, to prevent harm to the species.

Source - Tierramerica

Protected Areas

¶13. Guyana: Kaieteur National Park Faces Funding Hurdles

JULY 08, 2006 - According to Navin Chandarpal, Presidential Adviser on Sustainable Development, the development of the Kaieteur National Park (KNP) is hindered by one of its major challenges - funding. Chandarpal noted that the lack of financial support from international financial institutions has been placing numerous hurdles in the development process of KNP and this has been delaying the plan for the park. Meanwhile, initial difficulties in getting miners to cease operations in the vicinity of KNP have been largely overcome through dialogue. Authorities were able to convince miners of the importance of the preservation of the biodiversity of the facility. Kaieteur National Park is situated on the Guiana Shield, a plateau that is one of the world's oldest and most remote geological formations. The Park covers 627 square kilometers and

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242 square miles with approximately 63,000 hectares. It's the first National Park in Guyana.

Source - Stabroek News

¶14. Ecuador Increases Monitoring of Yasuni National Park

JUNE 30, 2006 - Ecuador's Minister of the Environment, Ana Alban, announced the creation of new forest and wildlife trafficking control and prevention posts in the southern part of the Yasuni National Park. This initiative was possible thanks to an agreement between the Ministry, Andes Petroleum Company, and Fideicomiso Mercantil Vigilancia Verde. According to the press report, this is one of the government's initiatives towards reaching the goals of the National System of Forest Control.

Source - La Hora

¶15. Parks and People, Not Parks vs. People

JUNE 15, 2006 - At the World Conservation Congress in Bangkok two Novembers ago, a parade of speakers at one session contended that the latest scourge of native peoples was not disease, war, alcohol or greedy interlopers; it was national parks. Protecting nature for the animals impoverishes millions of indigenous and other rural people by preventing them from farming, cutting timber or eating those same animals. Worse yet, protected areas don't even work that well because of the local hostility they engender. Parks are promoted by rich American and European conservation organizations practicing a new, soft colonialism. Or so the argument went. A couple of weeks ago on the Xingu River in the Brazilian Amazon, around 50 ribeirinhos, or river dwellers, strategized with conservationists on how to get their land included in vast areas they wanted the federal government to protect. So, are parks good for poor people or bad? And do they protect nature?

Source - SGgate.com

¶16. USD3 Billion Bid To Boost Biotech in Brazil

JULY 14, 2006 - A Brazilian consortium has unveiled a multi-billion-dollar strategy aimed at making the country a world leader in biotechnology. The Brazilian Forum of Biotechnology Competitiveness, which includes government agencies, the private sector and academic institutions, announced the plan on July 4. It identifies research areas that have the potential to boost the competitiveness of Brazilian industry, increase Brazil's participation in global trade, speed up its economic growth, and create jobs. The overall cost of putting the plan into action will be USD3 billion, which will come from the public and private sectors. Of this, more than USD530 million is earmarked for health-related biotechnology, including the production of drugs and

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vaccines for neglected diseases and cutting-edge research in the fields of genomics, proteomics, nano-biotechnology and stem-cell science. The plan entails creating new funding mechanisms, training, and improving the infrastructure of research institutions.

Source - SciDev

¶17. Chile, Argentina, Caribbean Lead in Access to New Technologies

JULY 07, 2006 - Chile, Argentina, Barbados, Jamaica and the Bahamas lead the region in terms of access to digital communications technology and its use, according to a new index released by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The index goes from 0 representing no access to new technologies to 1, which means these technologies are fully accessible. The Bahamas has an index of 0.58, followed by Chile and Barbados with 0.52. Argentina and Jamaica have an index of 0.47. The Americas region as a whole is led by Canada (0.65) and the US (0.62). Uruguay, Mexico, Venezuela and Costa Rica scored 0.43, Brazil 0.42, Peru, Panama and the Dominican Republic 0.39, Colombia 0.38, El Salvador 0.37, Ecuador 0.36, Bolivia, Paraguay and Guatemala 0.30, Cuba 0.27, Honduras 0.25, Nicaragua 0.24, and Haiti 0.15.

Source - Business News Americas. Article kindly shared by US Embassy Buenos Aires.

¶18. South American Countries Agree on S&T Cooperation

JUNE 07, 2006 - Science and Technology Ministers from nine South American countries signed an agreement on May 30 to elaborate an integration plan for science, technology, and innovation for 2006-2010. The Buenos Aires Declaration was signed by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador. One of the objectives of the agreement is to optimize regional science and technology cooperation.

Source - SciDev

¶19. Court Rules Pulp Mills Construction Can Continue

JULY 13, 2006 - The International Court of Justice in The Hague rejected Argentina's request to suspend the construction of two pulp mills in Uruguay on the grounds that they pose a pollution threat. "The circumstances did not require a provisional measure ordering the suspension of the mills' construction" said the president of the court, Rosalyn Higgins. The court ruled that the construction of the pulp mills posed no serious threat to the environment and could continue while the judges evaluate the potential risks of the pulp plants once they begin operation.

¶20. Judicial Ruling Requires Clean-Up of Argentina's Matanza-Riachuelo Basin

JULY 08, 2006 - The Matanza-Riachuelo river basin, the most polluted in Argentina for more than a century, could begin to see some cleaner waters as the result of an innovative ruling by the National Supreme Court of Justice -- considered a landmark in the history of Latin American environmental law. In response to a lawsuit by the residents affected by the pollution, the Argentine high court this month summoned 44 companies to report on the waste they dump into the Riachuelo River. It also urged the government to present a management plan and convened a public hearing for all parties involved for September 05. The decision not only made an impact amongst those directly involved, but also in the judicial arena. It caused a buzz at a recent Latin American conference on environmental law and policy, held in Buenos Aires Jun 20-30, with officials from legal systems across the region.

Source - Tierramerica

¶21. Chile: Paper Mill Fined

JULY 08, 2006 - The company Celulosa Arauco y Constitucion (CELCO), located in the 10th Chilean region of Los Lagos, will have to pay a fine of about 60,000 dollars for the foul odors emanating from its mill in 2004, ruled the Appeals Court, upholding a sentence of the health authorities in the city of Valdivia. The stench was perceptible 60 kilometers away, and triggered a range of health problems amongst the residents of San Jose de la Mariquina, north of Valdivia. Lucio Cuenca, director of the Latin American Environmental Conflict Observatory (OLCA), said in a Tierramerica interview that the ruling sets a positive precedent, and activists hope for a repeat in other cases before the courts against CELCO, because, in his opinion, "there are administrative and environmental incidents that justify the closing of the mill."

Source - Tierramerica

¶22. Codelco Spill Contaminates 17km of Marshland Near Santiago

JULY 11, 2006 - Over ten thousand liters of liquid mineral waste seeped from a Codelco plant into the Caren marsh in April, in the Alhue community of the Metropolitan region of Santiago, killing flora and fauna and contaminating drinking and irrigation water. A report by the Agriculture and Livestock Service (SAG) confirmed that the El Teniente plant owned by state-owned copper giant Codelco was the source of the leak, which began the evening of April 15 and lasted 12 hours. The contaminants spread over 17 kilometers of marshland, killing crops, livestock and countless fish that feed off the water. Codelco immediately informed the community and national authorities of the spill and launched a USD2 million recovery plan with universities and public services. Clean-up efforts were successful, said Jos Ignacio Gomez, Metropolitan Director of SAG.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

Energy

¶23. Chile Announces "Energy Autonomy" in Next Two Years

JULY 17, 2006 - Over the next two years, Chile will become energy "autonomous", cutting its current Argentine dependency and cooling a "national security threat", announced President Michelle Bachelet. The plan includes several ambitious projects which will eliminate the vulnerability of the Chilean economy and put an end to virtually the only bargaining chips neighboring countries such as Argentina

and Bolivia appeal to in dealings with Santiago. The plan to cut energy dependency on Argentina is based on a re-gasification plant of liquid gas being built by British Gas in a port city in the north of the country at a cost of 350 million US dollars. The plant should be operational by 2008 and together with other private initiatives and the development of gas deposits in Magallanes Region, in the extreme south, should help grant the country more energy independence.

Source - MercoPress

General

124. IBD Releases USD 1.9 Million For The Amazon

JULY 14, 2006 - The Inter-American Development Bank approved USD 1,9 million for the Program of Enforcement of the Joint Regional Management for the Amazon. This information was given by Rosalia Arteaga Serrano, Secretary General of the Organization of the Treaty for Amazon Cooperation during the first Meeting of Ministers of Defense of the Amazon countries in Bogota, Colombia. According to Serrano, one of the objectives is to create a regional policy for science and technology directed to the development and rationalization of the resources of the world's largest tropical forest. Serrano noted that this is very important in view of the "ongoing threat of biopiracy." Researchers of the Amazon countries found that Indian shamans are the major source of information regarding herbs, minerals and animals with medicinal properties.

Source - Public Affairs U.S. Embassy Brasilia

125. Leaky Pipes, Stingy Aid Slow Peru Gas Project

JULY 17, 2006 - Camisea is backed by an international consortium of companies, including Texas-based Hunt Oil, and the US supported Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). It's slated to turn Peru into a net energy exporter and save USD4.1 billion in energy costs from 2004 to 2033, according to the IDB. It will also create government royalties - one Peruvian province has already landed more than USD254 million. But critics want to know why one of the project's pipelines has ruptured five times since December 2004,

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impacting sensitive ecosystems and remote jungle communities. They also complain that benefits have not trickled down to poor Peruvians and that the IDB, which put in USD75 million in 2003, has not fulfilled its oversight role. "We are of the view Camisea has not been a success. It could have been better designed," US Treasury Assistant Secretary Clay Lowery told a Senate foreign relations hearing. The hearing focused on problems with multilateral banks funding pipelines in developing countries.

Source - Christian Science Monitor

126. Chile: Environmentalist Sells 4,000 Argentine Hectares to Business Group

JULY 18, 2006 - A December 2005 deal by environmentalist Douglas Tompkins to sell part of his Argentine land holdings marked the first time the American real-estate tycoon has dealt with the Angelini Group, the most wealthy business entity in Chile. Many hope the new relationship between the Tompkins and Angelini can generate a new dialogue between environmentalists and companies in the forest, fishing and energy sectors. Angelini, who already has 100,000 hectares of pine forest and 113,000 of natural forest in Argentina, will use the 4,000 hectares of poplars and willows in the Buenos Aires delta for wood pulp production. While the exact amount paid for the land is unknown, Argentine media reported Tompkins sold the land for USD6 million. If true, Tompkins would have made a USD5 million profit.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

127. Brazil: Environmentalists Threatened

JULY 08, 2006 - Vilmar Berna, an environmental journalist who won the United Nations Global 500 prize in 1999, lives under a death threat issued more than a month ago in Niteroi, a city neighboring Rio de Janeiro. He filed a complaint and requested police protection, but the response has been slow in coming. His situation is worrisome because in February 2005 another environmentalist was murdered, Dionisio Julio Ribeiro, defender of the Tingu Biological Reserve, also located in the Rio metropolitan area. A hunter confessed to the crime but was absolved in May "due to lack of evidence". The violent reaction against activists may come from big landowners in the Amazon as well as the artisanal fishermen along the beach where he lives -- they fear his presence because they use illegal fishing methods, he explained.

Source - Tierramerica